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New Students Respond Positively to Winter Class Orientation

Thursday, January 18, 2007

by Barbara Honegger Senior Military Affairs Journalist

One hundred ninety six new Naval Postgraduate School students received a hearty welcome and information-packed briefs from the school's leadership, administration and faculty at Winter class Orientation Day, Jan. 3.

"As a former student (Management, 1999), I know your time here will be rewarding," said Dean of Students Cmdr. Debbie Monroe in opening the program in King Hall. "Today is a great opportunity to get briefed on all of the services available to you as you begin your graduate education journey."

"You're tomorrow's world leaders who are part of a school with outstanding students from all the military services and many countries -- last quarter we had 276 international students from 50 nations -- and many operational fields," said Acting President Air Force Col. David Smarsh in his opening remarks. "This is a time to share as much of that operational experience as you can with your fellow students and our world-class faculty, and to develop your critical thinking skills, which you'll use throughout your career."

Acting Provost Peter Purdue addressed the students on behalf of Provost Leonard Ferrari, who has been named the new Acting NPS President by the Secretary of the Navy.

"The Naval Postgraduate School has been recognized by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission as DoD's highest-military-value educational institution," Purdue told the new class. "One of the main reasons is the unique set of operational experiences each of you bring to a world class faculty dedicated to real-world military solutions. So you're not just a student. You're part of a unique synergy of operationally experienced officer-students and nationally ranked, seasoned, defense-oriented instructors dedicated to forming the military force of the 21st century. You're participating in a world-class team developing new knowledge and new technology, and finding new ways to get that new knowledge and technology out to the fleet, the services and our coalition partners."

Purdue stressed teamwork and the importance of beginning thesis work early. "Start your thesis research as soon as you can," he said, "and think seriously about teaming up with your fellow graduate students in study groups. You'll be glad you did, because one of the most valuable and enduring aspects of your NPS experience will be your interactions with students from other services, agencies and countries. Many of these relationships will last throughout your careers."

Assistant Dean of the School of International Graduate Studies Gary Roser briefed the students on NPS international programs.

"Last year, we took Mobile Education Teams to over 100 countries, reaching 3,500 allied and coalition military officers and government-sponsored civilians," Roser noted. "Your class has the first NPS student from Malawi and, once again, students from Albania, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Latvia."

New student Army Capt. Chris Chambliss was excited to finally be at NPS. "NPS was my first choice," said the Russia foreign area officer who served as an infantry commander in Taji, Iraq, near Baghdad. "Everyone I spoke to said this was a great school."

"The orientation was helpful," Chambliss added. "I'm already familiar with the Monterey area, as my wife is active duty at DLI, so I found the NPS-specific portions especially valuable."

Capt. Howard Smith is a new student in the Computer Science Department.

"I chose NPS as well," he said. "I graduated from the Naval Academy and all of my military instructors who were doing their payback tours had gone to NPS. They all said, if you get the opportunity, it's a great tour, so be sure to do it."

International student Chee Wan Ng is one of 34 students from the joint NPS-Singapore Temasek Defence Systems Institute program in the new class.

"The orientation was very interesting and informative," said Ng, a geographic information systems engineering project manager with Singapore's Defence Science Technology Agency and a student in modeling, virtual environments and simulation. "I especially appreciated Col. Roser's brief on the international program, which was especially relevant for me and my colleagues. Also, it's been a wonderful experience being able to be in the BOQ in the main building at NPS at the beginning of our stay, for my wife and myself," he said. "It feels great to be here."

Ng proudly noted that one of his instructors in the Singapore portion of the joint program is Prof. Lui Pao Chuen, chief defense scientist for the Singapore Ministry of Defence, an NPS alumnus (Operations Research, 1973) who was inducted into the Naval Postgraduate School Hall of Fame in 2002.

The day's orientation also included a command overview and detailed briefs on the International Programs Office, student services, travel, information technology, library services, equal employment opportunity, safety, the student council, NPS Foundation, alumni relations, chaplain services, the medical clinic and Tricare, Fleet and Family Support Center, Morale Welfare and Recreation, housing, Army community service, and the Naval War College JPME programs co-located at NPS.

The day was capped by a vendor fair in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom in Herrmann Hall in the afternoon.

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